
PERSPECTIVES

French Exports Rose to \$8.1 Billion in 2008

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France exported 6.3 billion euros (\$8.1 billion) of arms in 2008, up from 5.5 billion euros in the previous year, Defense Minister Hervé Morin said.

“In 2008, the target was 6 billion [euros] in exports,” he said January 19 [2009] in presenting his New Year’s greetings to the defense establishment at the Air and Space Museum at Le Bourget. “We did it and did even better, with 6.3 billion in 2008 against 5.5 in 2007, which is the best year since 2000.”

France aims to beat that in 2009 and reach the same level as Britain, he said. French military export hopes center on sales of the Rafale combat aircraft, which is under negotiation with Libya. The United Arab Emirates [has] said it wants Rafales to modernize their fleet; and the fighter is a contender in Brazil, India, and Switzerland.

Morin said he had told industry that he would not hesitate to go around the world promoting French products where they had made it to a final selection.

“Because a country’s purchasing decision depends on the quality of the product of course, the product’s price, but also it’s a political act. There has to be both: industrial and political. If one is missing, our position is weakened,” he said.

That [is] why the government has undertaken a reform of export procedures, with the result that export license applications now can be processed in less than 40 days, compared with 80 days previously, and only 7 percent of requests were delayed compared with 30, he said.

A procedure for global authorizations has been launched; and half of the applications from industry were made online compared with 3 percent two years ago, he said.

Britain jumped to second-largest arms exporter last year after the U.S. on the back of a sale of 72 Eurofighter Typhoons to Saudi Arabia.